

## Keira's Birth Story

I went in to labour at 7am, but having had some contractions the week before, and the week before that, I wanted to make sure it was the real thing before I rushed out to call Pat home from work. The contractions were 5 minutes apart from the beginning. I started off with my tens machine (which I'm still not really convinced did anything! But it gave me something to press and the illusion of control!) Valerie my Independent Midwife was due to come and see me that morning anyway.

It was 10.30am ish when she arrived, the contractions had got a bit more intense by then but I could still speak through them just. Valerie said it was early on but after she left I had a feeling things might be quicker than any of us thought, so I phoned my other half to come home from work and my Mum and Dad to come and pick up Alex (my almost three year old little boy). My other half works an hour and a half away and my parents live an hour's drive away. By the time my Mum and Dad got here the contractions were closer together and much more intense. My poor Dad didn't know what to say or do. I was in the middle of a contraction on the settee and he's saying, "One of your light bulbs has gone, I'll get a step ladder and change that for you!"

My other half arrived shortly after; my parents took Alex home with them. By 1.30pm ish then the contractions were every two minutes or so and very painful, I asked Pat to call Valerie. She arrived half an hour or so later to the sight of me leaning over my beanbag with my bottom in the air! My other half had inflated my birth pool already and started filling it but there wasn't enough water to get in yet. Valerie did a VE and I was 8cm's. My waters broke I couldn't believe it but the contractions were so close together and painful it was looking like things were going to happen quickly. Valerie called the second midwife Michelle who was going to be there just for the birth. I asked for some gas and air as the contractions were very painful by now. The first cylinder of gas and air didn't want to come out but fortunately Valerie had a second. Michelle the second midwife arrived just after three by now I feeling like I wanted to push. There still wasn't enough water in the pool for me to get in.

The second cylinder of gas and air exploded making a really loud noise and injuring Valerie's thumb (fortunately Michelle had some more gas and air with her). By this time my body was involuntary pushing and I

was making the strangest noises with the contractions. Valerie said she thought there was still a lip of cervix, but the pool was ready so I got in. By 5pm the contractions were coming thick and fast another VE showed my cervix was fully dilated and the baby was starting to come down. I had some yoghurt banana and some tea. By about 6.30pm one side of my face had gone all puffy. I could feel the baby coming down inside me. A few more contractions and the head was partly out then my contractions deserted me! I had no more contractions for about six or seven minutes. The midwives asked me to turn over on my back as the baby seemed to be a bit stuck (her chin wasn't tucked in quite enough) still no contractions, they asked me to stand up still none, finally they asked me to get out. I walked into the living room leaned over my beanbag, one more push and a bit of help from Valerie and the rest of the baby came out. Valerie pushed her through my legs so I could pick her up first but I was so shaky and exhausted I couldn't. She was a girl! Keira was born at 6.58pm on the 21<sup>st</sup> January.

The cord was cut after it had stopped pulsating by Patrick my other half. Two hours or so later the placenta still hadn't come despite me trying to push it out, so I had syntometrine and the placenta came out about five minutes later. On looking at my perineum the Valerie realised I had torn quite badly, and one side of my face was still swollen and my chest was feeling quite tight (an allergic reaction to the pool liner we think). We decided to go to hospital. Valerie and Patrick came with me. It wasn't what I wanted after having my baby at home but it was the right thing to do as the tear turned out to be fourth degree and it was stitched in the operating theatre under a spinal. My other half passed out during this and had to be caught by three midwives. I stayed two nights (they were reluctant to let me go).

My hospital experience couldn't have been more different to my first one (emergency c section). I had my own room with ensuite bathroom and no less than four visits from the head of midwifery. The cynical part of me thinks it was my complaining and taking an IM with me that got me the better treatment.

I had a fantastic homebirth with two amazing Independent Midwives, and my partner Patrick who was fantastic the whole way through. It was the most difficult challenging thing I've ever done and I couldn't have

done it without them; it was a truly special experience I will treasure forever.